

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is Idaho transitioning to new standards?

A: In Idaho, we face a challenge in which students do well academically in grades K-12 but far too many graduate from high school unprepared for the rigors of college, professional-technical education, or the workforce. We are not alone. Many other states face the same challenge. Therefore, in 2009, Superintendent Luna worked with fellow state superintendents and governors to take a look at the academic standards in the core subject areas of mathematics and English language arts. Through this state-led, voluntary effort, Idaho helped develop higher, more rigorous standards in mathematics and English language arts that are comparable with every other state and any other country in the world. By implementing these higher standards, we can make sure every student graduates from high school prepared for the world that awaits them.

Q: What was the process to adopt the new standards?

A: In Idaho, we followed the same process we follow every five years to review and adopt new standards. We brought in Idaho teachers to review the standards. Idaho's colleges and universities also weighed in, telling us these are college- and career-ready standards. The Idaho State Department of Education held more than 20 regional public meetings in 2010 to gather feedback on the standards. The State Board of Education reviewed the standards in 2010 and held a public comment period. The State Board chose to adopt these standards in 2010. The Idaho Legislature gave final approval for the adoption of these standards as our new state for mathematics and English language arts in 2011. That is when they became the Idaho Core Standards in mathematics and English language arts. It is still up to each local school district to adopt curriculum to meet these standards.

Q: How will local school districts adopt curriculum?

A: The adoption of these new standards has not changed the way local school districts choose curriculum. Local school districts will still review and adopt curriculum at the local level with input from teachers, parents and others. Please contact your local school district to learn more about its curricular materials adoption process.

Q: How will this affect my child?

A: No matter which grade your child is in, they will be learning to higher academic standards as a result of the new Idaho Core Standards. As a parent, you will notice shifts in what your child is learning in both English language arts and mathematics.

Here are three major shifts you will notice in English Language Arts and Literacy:

1. Students will read challenging texts in every class. They will continue to read classic literature, stories, and poems in English class, but they also will be challenged with studying and analyzing non-fiction texts in all subject areas as well. As a result, students will be prepared to read, analyze and write about all types of texts at a higher level, whether they are fiction or non-fiction, when they graduate from high school.
2. Students will be asked to use evidence from the text when writing papers or making oral presentations. In all classes, the standards will require students to not only read the text but dig into it to support their arguments or research. As a result, students will be better prepared to support their arguments and decisions with evidence, not just opinion, whether they are in college or the workforce.

3. Students will see an increased focus on vocabulary across all grade levels. As a result, students will continue to learn new vocabulary words as they progress through school as well as the correct context in which to use them. This is more important than ever in the 21st Century as students live and work in the digital age and encounter new words and terms constantly.

Here are three major shifts you will notice in Mathematics:

1. Students will work more deeply in fewer topics. In each grade level, your child's teacher will cover fewer concepts than in the past but go into much more depth on each concept. This makes sure every student gains a full understanding before moving on to the next concept. As a result, your child will gain a full and foundational understanding of mathematics before moving on to the next grade level.
2. Students will understand why math works and be asked to talk about and prove their understanding. Students will no longer just memorize formulas but will learn why a particular formula exists. As a result, students will learn critical foundational concepts and problem-solving skills in the early grades so they are prepared for higher levels of math, such as algebra, once they reach the middle grades.
3. Students will be asked to use math in real-world situations. Students will not just memorize formulas or methods but will learn strategies for solving problems they could encounter in life. As a result, students will gain critical thinking and problem-solving skills while in school that they can apply in postsecondary education and the workforce.

Q: Will these standards change the way government or history is taught in my child's school?

A: These standards include literacy standards for other subject areas to make sure students learn how to read, analyze, and write in any subject matter or career field they choose. However, these standards do not change the content standards in government, history, political science, science, arts, or health. They only change the content standards in mathematics and English language arts. The content standards for those subject areas are posted on our website at http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/content_standards/ and are reviewed every five years by the State Board of Education.

Q: Is the federal government requiring Idaho to adopt new standards?

A: No. Idaho voluntarily chose to adopt these standards in 2011. These standards were developed through a state-led effort. The federal government has not been involved in the process of developing or implementing these standards. Idaho signed a Memorandum of Agreement with other states to work together to develop these standards. That document clearly states this is a state-led effort and that the federal government is not involved. Idaho has not received any federal funding that requires the adoption of these new standards.

Q: What is the timeline for implementation?

A: Here is a timeline that shows the development and implementation of these new academic standards.

- 2009-10 school year: Idaho worked with other states to create these new standards.
- 2010-11 school year: Idaho conducted public outreach about the new standards and analyzed how the standards aligned with Idaho's previous standards.
- 2011-12 school year: The state has offered professional development for district leadership teams and master teachers.
- 2012-13 school year: The state has offered professional development for teachers and school administrators statewide.

- 2013-14 school year: The Idaho Core State Standards will first be taught in all Idaho public schools. (Some Idaho schools have already begun to implement the new standards.)
- 2014-15 school year: The new assessment aligned to the Idaho Core Standards will be delivered to Idaho students in Spring 2015.

Q: How will Idaho students perform when tested against these new standards?

A: Idaho is currently working to develop the next generation of assessments that will measure these higher academic standards, beginning in Spring 2015. Even with the best professional development the state can provide and the most highly effective teacher in the classroom, we recognize these standards are higher. It will take a few years for Idaho students to master them. States that have already implemented higher standards similar to these and measured their students for the first time saw a significant drop in the number of students performing at grade level. [Kentucky](#), for example, saw the number of students scoring proficient drop by one-third. We can expect similar results here in Idaho. It is not because our kids woke up one day and weren't as smart as they were the day before. It's because we are holding them to a higher standard, and that is a good thing for them and their future.